

HOUSE BILL NO. 354

INTRODUCED BY M. CAFERRO, LEWIS

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4 A BILL FOR AN ACT ENTITLED: "AN ACT HELPING ENSURE EQUAL ACCESS TO FREE APPROPRIATE  
5 PUBLIC EDUCATION FOR DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING CHILDREN; REQUIRING THE BOARD OF PUBLIC  
6 EDUCATION TO ESTABLISH STANDARDS FOR SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETERS AND PERSONNEL WHO  
7 PROVIDE DIRECT INSTRUCTION USING SIGN LANGUAGE; REQUIRING A SCHOOL DISTRICT TO COMPLY  
8 WITH THE INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES EDUCATION ACT AND TO HAVE PERSONNEL WITH  
9 SPECIFIED QUALIFICATIONS HELP DESIGN THE INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAM OF A  
10 STUDENT WHOSE PRIMARY DISABILITY IS LISTED AS DEAF OR HARD OF HEARING; PROVIDING AN  
11 APPROPRIATION; AND PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE."

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13 WHEREAS, nationally, the majority of deaf and hard of hearing students are educated in their local school  
14 districts; and

15 WHEREAS, as stated in "Toward Equality", a report by the Commission on the Education of the Deaf,  
16 between the ages of 8 and 18, deaf and hard of hearing children go from a 1.3 grade reading level to a 2.8 grade  
17 reading level, representing only a 1 1/2 year gain in reading skills over a 10-year period; and

18 WHEREAS, 30% of deaf and hard of hearing children leave school functionally illiterate; and

19 WHEREAS, only 8% of deaf and hard of hearing children graduate from college; and

20 WHEREAS, approximately 33% of the deaf population rely on government assistance; and

21 WHEREAS, most school districts have no standards for signing skills; and

22 WHEREAS, as documented in "Skill Levels of Educational Interpreters Working in Public Schools", a  
23 report by the renowned researchers Schick and Williams, many deaf children receive an interpretation of  
24 classroom discourse that might inadequately represent the information being communicated, perhaps reflecting  
25 the facts that educational interpreting is still a relatively new discipline and that many school districts are unaware  
26 of the type of training and skills that are needed to serve as an educational interpreter; and

27 WHEREAS, there are approximately 200 deaf and hard of hearing students in Montana's public schools  
28 according to the "Special Education Report to the 2005 Montana Legislature".

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30 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MONTANA:



